



Special Events Recycling

Adding Recycling to your Event

MassDEP Municipal Waste Reduction Outreach Toolkit



Large events, like the Marshfield Fair or Lowell Folk Festival, attract large crowds. And large crowds create a lot of waste which creates a lot of opportunities for recycling. Given a choice to recycle or throw that plastic bottle away, most people would like to do the right thing and recycle. All they need is an opportunity to do so.

By arranging for the collection of recyclables at these types of events, you present them with that opportunity, and give your community a chance to prevent valuable recyclables from entering the waste stream and filling up our landfills and combustion facilities.

And it's not just the attendees of these events that generate waste. The vendors create tremendous amounts of waste, too, and they shouldn't miss out on the opportunity to recycle, either. In fact, you could even require that vendors contractually agree to recycle before you grant them access to selling their goods at your event, thereby ensuring at least some materials will be recycled.

Why should my community organize recycling at special events?

Special events in the United States generate hundreds of thousands of tons of waste each year. Managing this waste can be costly, consume many hours of volunteer and staff time, and creates problems with litter and other related nuisances. What's more, a lot of this "waste" isn't waste at all and can be recycled or composted, or avoided altogether. In addition to economic and obvious environmental benefits of reducing waste, special events are an ideal forum for promoting recycling by demonstrating that recycling is possible wherever you are.

Okay, I'm convinced. Where do I start?

Here are some initial questions to think about as you begin to incorporate recycling into your special event.

- ⇒ What kinds of waste are typically generated at the event?
- ⇒ What materials could be recycled?
- ⇒ Who manages waste collection and who hauls it away? Could they manage the recycling?
- ⇒ What types of trash and recycling containers are needed?
- ⇒ What are the associated costs for trash and recycling containers, hauling, disposal, recycling, and labor (either in dollars or volunteer time)?
- ⇒ Are there local organizations, agencies, or individuals that might be interested in supporting recycling efforts?

To help you get started, we've compiled several guides from Massachusetts communities and other communities in New England, who've successfully hosted these types of events as well as case studies from other states. The guides include all the information you'll need to get started with special events recycling as well as sample handouts, flyers and press releases to promote your event.

